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The Day of Rest ;

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*THE SABBATH AND THE
LORD'S DAY.*



BY

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AUTHOR OF "POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN REVELATION AND NATURAL SCIENCE," "THE CHAIN OF LIFE IN GEOLOGICAL TIME," ETC., ETC.

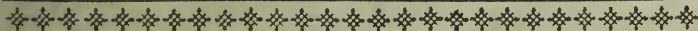
REVISED BY HIS SON, W. B. D.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

Incorporated 1899.

56 PATERNOSTER ROW AND 65 ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.





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SUMMARY.

Introduction.

- I. The Day of Rest—Reason for the Day of Rest.
- II. Past ages and Rest—In Old Testament and New Testament—
The life of ages—Days of geology—The Sabbath in the Decalogue.
- III. The Sabbath—Its primitive obligations.
- IV. The Sabbath law consistent from the beginning.
- V. The Sabbath in its various relations—Christ and the Sabbath—God's rest explained in Hebrews.
- VI. The relation of the Lord's Day to the Sabbath.
- VII. The privileges and uses of the Lord's Day.

THE DAY OF REST;

OR, THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY.



HERE are wonderful links of connection between the ways of God in creation, in providence, and in grace, which are always deserving of study, more es-

Links of connection between creation, providence, and grace.

pecially when they are pointed out by the Word of God itself. This is eminently the case with the Sabbath law. Placed in the middle of the Ten Commandments, between the precepts that relate to God and those that relate to man, it must have a moral and spiritual significance. Providing for a weekly day of rest from labour for all men, good and evil, and even for the animals under their control, it should have a direct relation to our external well-being. Enforced by a reason carrying our minds back to the original creation of the world, it should be connected in some way with the great work of constructing the earth for man, and with man's own earliest relations to his Creator.

The place of the Sabbath law.

The provision it makes.

The reason of it.

I.

At first sight it seems a very simple explanation of the reason annexed to the commandment, that God made the world and things therein in six

The day of rest.

The days of creation.

natural days, and rested on the seventh, and that He enjoins on us the following of His example. But the more we think of this the more unsatisfactory it becomes. The parallel does not hold good. If it pleased God to make the world in six of our ordinary days and to rest on the seventh, this was a work done once for all, and bears no analogy to our recurring weeks of toil and days of rest. Nor is there any apparent need for our thus seeming to imitate God's procedure, if that

No inherent moral obligation to give up one-seventh part of our time.

were the only reason. Still less does one see any inherent moral obligation resting on us to give up one-seventh of our time on account of such imitation. This incongruity is only increased by the evident intention of the lawgiver to represent the Sabbath not as a new institution but as a primitive practice, to be remembered and continued.

The days of creation divine periods or ages.

It has long appeared to the writer that the proper significance of this command is reached only when we bear in mind that the creative days of the first chapter of Genesis are really 'days of God'—divine periods or ages,¹ as they are called in Psalm xc. This conclusion I desire to rest not so much on the discoveries of modern science, though these fully vindicate it, as on the usage and statements of the Bible writers and their contemporaries, and of the early Christian Church. The writer of Genesis sees no incongruity in those

¹ Heb. *Olam*

early days which passed before natural days were instituted; 'ineffable days' as Augustine well calls them. He does not represent the seventh day as having an evening and morning like the other, nor does he hint that God resumed His work on an eighth day. In chapter second he represents the world as produced in one day, evidently using the word in an indefinite sense. Further, in the succeeding literature of the Old Testament, while we have no actual statement that the creative days were natural days, or that the world was made in a short period, we find the term 'age' applied to God's periods of working; and in Psalm civ., which is a poetical narrative of creation, the idea conveyed is that of lapse of time, without division into days. We shall find in the sequel that the same idea is contained in the teaching of our Lord, and of the apostolic Epistles, and was familiar to the Primitive Church. That we may fully understand the bearing of these facts on the Sabbath question, it will be necessary for us to consider in some detail a doctrine common to the teaching of the Word of God, and of natural and physical science; and which we may designate as the doctrine of 'time-worlds,' or this one world existing in successive ages of time as distinguished from 'space-worlds,' or various worlds considered as having certain dimensions, and existing in space.

The seventh day in Genesis has no evening and morning.

The word day indefinitely used in Gen. ii.

The term *olam* in the later books of the Old Testament.

The teaching of our Lord and the Apostles.

The doctrine of 'time-worlds' common to revelation and science.

When we speak of the world or the universe,

the ordinary hearer has perhaps before his mind merely the idea of bodies occurring in space ; and the vast discoveries of modern times as to the distances and magnitudes of the heavenly bodies have contributed to fill the minds of men with conceptions of the immensity of space, perhaps to the exclusion of another direction of thought equally important. Worlds must, however, exist in time as well as in space. This idea is very familiar to the mind of the geologist, who traces the long history of the earth through successive periods, and also knows that each succeeding age has seen it different from its condition on those which preceded it. This consideration is also before the mind of the physical astronomer, who thinks of suns and planets as passing through different successive conditions, and as actually presenting different stages in the present.

Worlds exist in time as well as in space.

These ideas ancient.

They are present in Divine revelation.

The past and future stages of the earth convey the idea of time-worlds.

Now these ideas, though rendered more definite by modern discoveries, are very old ; and they impressed themselves on the mind of antiquity before men could measure the vastness of the universe in space. They are also present in Divine revelation, and it is necessary to have them before our minds if we would enter into the thoughts of the writers of the Old and New Testaments when they treat of time and eternity. The several stages of the earth in its progress from chaos, and prophetic pictures of its changes in the future, as

stated in the Bible, alike indicate a succession of 'worlds' quite different from each other; a series of time-worlds, or ages of God's working.

II.

The use made of the Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek *æon* in the sense of age, or even of eternity, brings before us still more clearly this Biblical idea of time-worlds. In that sublime prayer of Moses, the man of God, which we have in Psalm xc., God, who existed before the mountains were brought forth, with whom a thousand years are as a watch in the night, is said to be from 'everlasting to everlasting,' as the English version has it; but more properly from 'age to age' of those long cosmic ages in which He renews and furnishes successive worlds. So when God is said to be 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity' (Isa. lvii. 15), it is not abstract eternity, but these successive ages, or time-worlds, which are His habitation. Thus God, as revealed to us in His works, dwells in the grand succession of worlds in time, thus continuously and variously manifesting His power, a much more living and attractive view of divinity than the mere abstract affirmation of eternity.

The Hebrew and Greek words *olam* and *æon* embody the idea of time-worlds.

God dwells in the succession of 'worlds' in time.

The same thought is taken up and amplified in the New Testament. We may cite as an example the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we read that

The same thought in the New Testament.

Christ con-
stituting
the ages.

The ages
constituted
by the Word
of God.

The life of
the ages.

The relation
to us of the
whole of
God's work-
ing.

God hath appointed His Son 'heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds' (Heb. i. 2, R.V. marg.), more literally 'constituted the æons or ages.' This does not refer, as one might conceive from the English translation, to different worlds in space, but to the successive ages of this world, in which it was being gradually prepared and fitted up for man. So Paul speaks of the gospel as 'the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things' (Eph. iii. 9). So also, in Hebrews xi., it is said that 'by faith we understand that the ages were constituted by the Word of God.' Another fine illustration of this idea is found in the Epistle to Titus, where it is revealed that we live 'in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word' (Titus i. 2). The expression 'the world began' here represents the 'ages of time,' and the 'eternal life' is the 'life of the ages.' Thus what we are taught to hope for is life through the unlimited ages of God's working; and this life has been promised, before the beginning of the time-worlds of creation. So the whole past, present, and future of God's working has its relation to us, and is included under this remarkable idea of ages or time-worlds, and is appropriated by faith and hope as the possession of God's people. We can thus look forward by faith to an

endless life with Him in all the future ages of His boundless working.

The long creative days of geology may thus be shown to throw a most important light on the institution of the weekly Sabbath and its continuance as the Lord's Day. If it is true that the seventh or Sabbath day of creation still continues, and was intended to be a day of rest for the Creator and for man made in His likeness, we find in this a substantial reason for the place of the Sabbath in the Decalogue.

The light thrown on the day of rest by the creative days of geology.

At first sight the place there given to the fourth commandment, and the vast importance attached to this law by the Hebrew writers, strike us as strange and anomalous. The Sabbath stands as the sole example of a ritual observance in these commandments, which otherwise mark the most general moral relations of man to God and to his fellow-men. Further, the reason given seems trivial. If it is meant that God worked on six natural days, and rested on the seventh, the question arises, What is He doing on the subsequent days? Does He keep up this alternation of six days' work and one day's rest; and if not, how is this an example to us? But let us suppose that when God rested on the seventh day He entered into an æon of vast duration, intended to be distinguished by the happy rest of man in an Edenic world, where every day would have been

The place of the Sabbath law at first sight strange and anomalous.

a Sabbath ; or if there was a weekly Sabbath, it would have been but a memorial of a work which had led to the continuous rest then enjoyed. Let us further suppose that at the fall of man the Sabbath Day was instituted, or obtained a new significance as a memorial of an Edenic rest which was lost, and also as a memorial of God's promise, that through a Redeemer it would be restored.

How the Sabbath becomes the central point of all religion.

Then the Sabbath becomes the central point of all religion, the standing and perpetual memorial of an Eden lost, and of a paradise to be restored by the coming Seed of the woman, as well as a time to prepare ourselves for this future life. The commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath Day,' called upon the Israelite to remember the fall of man, to remember the promise of a Saviour, to look forward to a future Sabbath-rest in the reign

The Sabbath the Gospel in the Decalogue.

of the Redeemer. It is thus the Gospel in the Decalogue, giving vitality to the whole, and is most appropriately placed, and with a more full explanation than any other command, between the laws that relate to God and the laws that relate to man.

Man, as originally created, needed no Sabbath law, for he had entered into the perpetual rest of his Creator. But when he fell from this high

The Sabbath a spiritual privilege to fallen man.

estate the Sabbath was made for him, not as a mere legal obligation, but as a great spiritual privilege. For this reason faithful men and women

in Israel of old clung to it as the earnest of the great salvation which was to restore the lost paradise for which their hearts yearned, and with reference to which their cry was, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest' (Psa. lv. 6, R.V.). The desire for rest.

III.

If this is a correct view of the relation of the Jewish Sabbath to the creation and the fall, it enables us to appreciate the force of the injunction to 'remember' the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for in this case the Sabbath must have been no new institution, but one of primitive obligation, and dating from the fall of man at the latest. The primitive obligations of the Sabbath. There is also in the six days of labour an implied reference to the curse incurred by man at the fall, and in so far as the seventh day is concerned, a partial relaxation of this eating of bread with the sweat of the brow.

Although we have no Sabbath law till the time of the Exodus, and there is scarcely any reference previously to other religious ordinances than those of sacrifice and circumcision, still there are previous indications of a Sabbath. Thus we find Noah reckoning by weeks in sending out birds from the ark (Gen. viii. 12). Laban and Jacob also reckoned by weeks (Gen. xxix. 27). In Early indications of a Sabbath.

The Sabbath
and manna.

Joseph's time also, the Hebrews reckoned by sevens in the division of time (Gen. i. 3, 10). So in the early part of Exodus before the giving of the law, the Sabbath is incidentally mentioned, in connection with the gift of the manna, and in terms which show that it was already known as 'a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath unto the Lord' (Exod. xvi. 23, R.V.). It is interesting, however, to observe that there seems to have been no pre-intimation of the day, except the gathering of a double quantity of manna on the sixth day, and that the rulers reported the fact to Moses, as if asking instruction; but Moses at once interprets the fact as God's recognition of His own day.

The early
notices of
the Sabbath
few and
casual, but
sufficient
when taken
in connec-
tion with
other pas-
sages.

These early notices of the Sabbath are, it is true, few and casual, and remind us of the informal way in which the Lord's Day is introduced in the New Testament. But when taken in connection with the statement as to God's hallowing the day at the close of His creative work, and with the word 'remember' in the commandment, they are sufficient to show the Patriarchal origin of the rest of the seventh day, and to carry it back to the gate of Eden.

The connec-
tion of the
primitive
Sabbath
with labour.

The primitive Sabbath of Genesis and of the Moral Law has thus a definite connection with human labour and with the physical well-being of man. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,' is the doom of fallen humanity—a doom

too fearfully felt in the whole history of the world, and, strange to say, apparently not less so in our times of mechanical invention and mastery over nature than in ruder ages. How terribly would this doom have been aggravated had man been expelled from Eden to a life of unremitting toil!

But the Sabbath stood between him and this fate, and so far as human experience has shown, was the only possible means of alleviating his life of labour. The Sabbath the only means of alleviating the life of labour.

Hence Moses impresses on his nation of emancipated slaves the constant remembrance of this day, and enjoins on them the extension of its benefits to their own slaves and to strangers within their gates, even though not believers in Jehovah. Hence also the provisions of the law are extended even to domestic animals, which, though destitute of spiritual natures, have bodily organisms, which under ceaseless labour will be worn out prematurely and subjected to a living death while they survive. These lower animals have no share in the moral law directly, but it is immoral to deprive them of the little happiness of which they are capable, and to subject them to conditions inconsistent with their physical well-being. The

physiological necessity for a periodical interruption of toil, whether for man or beast, is thus affirmed in the law, and it is verified by all that we have learned of the constitution of living things. It is confirmed by the experience of all thoughtful The physiological necessity for a periodical interruption of toil for man and beast confirmed.

A nation without a Sabbath must decay.

The intervention of Divine justice hardly needed to inflict the penalty for disregard of the Sabbath.

The man who works six days and rests on the seventh will do more and better work than the man who works incessantly.

men and of all nations. A nation without a Sabbath must fall to a low ebb of civilisation and efficiency, or its people must become prematurely old and worn out. It scarcely needs any special intervention of Divine justice to inflict on those who disregard the Sabbath the penalties denounced by the Hebrew prophets. Those who would take away the day of rest from the working man on any pretext are not his true friends ; and it is one of the hopeful signs of the times that, in recent discussions of this question, the working men and those who might most truly be considered their representatives have shown themselves opposed to innovations which, however plausible and harmless in appearance, might be the thin edge of the wedge which would break down this great privilege. It seems to be a result of physiological and social laws, as well as of moral laws, that the man who works six days and rests on the seventh will do more and better work than the man who works without interruption, because the Sabbath is a mental and physical restorative to wearied nature. Thus nations which are so unwise as to sacrifice the day of rest, find that instead of promoting their wealth and happiness they have involved themselves in hopeless slavery.

IV.

There is a strict consistency throughout in the Biblical history of the Sabbath, from the first announcement of the rest of the Creator in the second chapter of Genesis till the advent of the promised Redeemer, and no room is left here for attributing a late origin to the Sabbath law without throwing the whole history into confusion. The Sabbath of Exodus is meaningless without the creative days, the fall, and the promise of redemption. The testimony of the Psalms and Prophets pre-supposes the Sabbath law and its spiritual relations. Among the sectaries of the time of Christ, the Sabbath had only experienced the fate of other spiritual elements of the Old Dispensation which they had 'made void by their traditions,' substituting form for substance.

In the repetition of the Decalogue, in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, another reason is annexed to the fourth commandment: 'Remember that thou wast a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence.' This is in perfect harmony with the reason in Exodus, and merely a further development of it. The first reason refers to the rest of the Creator, the second to the rest from Egyptian bondage, and the promised rest of Canaan. Both are referred

The Sabbath in the early books of Scripture.

Another reason for the fourth commandment.

Perfect harmony between the reasons.

to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the connection between them is made clear. The mistake of supposing them to be mutually contradictory is peculiar to a certain stage of modern hyper-criticism.

The supposition that they are contradictory hyper-critical.

We may further note here that the Israelites when enslaved in Egypt must have been, to a great extent at least, deprived of the Sabbath rest. The Egyptians, even if they had themselves some notion of a Sabbath, were not likely to have consulted the scruples or the comfort of their foreign slaves in such matters, any more than modern pleasure-seekers are disposed to regard those of railway employees or museum curators. The Hebrews had thus known the bitterness of ceaseless labour, and so are reminded in Deuteronomy of those past sufferings as a reason for their holding fast to the privilege restored to them in their newly-found freedom. It would be well if those modern nations which neglect the Lord's Day could see it in this light, and receive it as a part of that liberty with which Christ makes His people free.

Israel in Egypt.

The Hebrews' experience of ceaseless labour in Egypt.

The Sabbath in the post-Mosaic stages of Jewish history till the time of Christ.

The post-Mosaic stages of Jewish history show that the connection of the Sabbath with the primitive promise of redemption and with the liberation of the chosen people, are carried onward to the time of Christ. At some periods of the history, the Sabbath no doubt fell greatly into

neglect ; but these were times of general decadence and of lapse into idolatry, and every revival of religion exalted the obligations of the Sabbath. Isaiah laments the misuse and neglect of the day, In the time of Isaiah. and promises even to the eunuchs and the strangers in Palestine that if they will keep the Sabbath, and hold fast by God's covenant implied in it, He will give them 'a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters . . . an everlasting name' (Isa. lvi. 5. See also the grand words of Isa. lviii. 13, 14).

Jeremiah connects in the strongest manner its observance, as an efficient cause, with God's blessing, and with prosperity ; and regards the keeping of the Sabbath as an essential condition of national welfare (Jer. xvii. 24, 25). Ezekiel Ezekiel's view. expressly calls the Sabbath a sign or pledge that God would sanctify His people (Ezek. xx. 12). The profound significance of this prophetic doctrine becomes evident only when we connect the Sabbath with God's age-long rest, with man's fall and with the promise of a final and eternal Sabbath, in the manner already explained. There The effect of prophetic statements. can be no doubt that these strong statements of the prophets were influential with the Jews in the captivity ; and that when they were again delivered from bondage they would return with enhanced ideas of Sabbath obligation, akin to those of their fathers at the time of the Exodus. We see this

in the legislation of Nehemiah ; and in a debased and ritualistic form in the Pharisaic strictness at the time of Christ.

V.

The Sabbath
in its vari-
ous rela-
tions.

The broad and age-long extent of the 'rest of God' which we have been considering, not only gives a high and spiritual significance to the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, and connects them with God's great working in the universe, and with the fall and redemption of man, but it gives us practical information respecting the manner of keeping the Lord's Day, and its relation to Christian doctrine and practice.

The nature
of God's
rest.

When God had finished His work of creation, His rest with reference to this world was one of contemplation, and of beneficent and merciful attention to its interests. He regards His work and pronounces it good, and then enters into His rest. But the sin of man modified profoundly these conditions and relations ; for God in His mercy occupies His Sabbath rest, lost to man by the fall, in that work of redemption by which it is to be finally restored.

Attitude of
Christ.

The attitude of Christ the Redeemer with regard to the Sabbath is in harmony with this, and His teachings appear to accord with this view. In the oft-recurring conflict with the Pharisees, whose traditions had turned the Sabbath into a day of

mere austerity and unmeaning ritual, He answers them on this ground. His reply to them is, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work' (John v. 17, R.V.). Thus, in justifying the use He makes of the Sabbath day, His defence is that His Father also, as well as He, has been constrained to work in man's behoof, to undo and remedy the evil which man has brought upon himself. His miracles on the Sabbath day, and the examples He gives, are object-lessons to the same effect; as that of the ox falling into a pit, the healing of diseases—the putting right of what through fault or accident has gone wrong—all perfectly consistent with the divine activity of love and mercy put forth for man's redemption. God's Sabbath rest, which should have filled this whole age since man's creation, is thus broken in upon; and Christ couples Himself with His Father as co-operating in the needed work of restoration.

The need of effort on man's behalf.

It breaks in upon the Rest of God

While this reply is given to the distorted view of the caviller, Christ assumes a higher tone of authority in denouncing that Pharisaical rigidity which made the day a burden rather than a privilege. For in so doing, the Pharisee takes it upon himself to be the expounder and enforcer of the commands of God. Against such presumption, Christ claims for Himself the Lordship of the Sabbath: 'the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.' It is to be observed that He makes

The Sabbath a privilege, not a burden.

Christ is
Lord of the
Sabbath.

this claim in the capacity of the Son of Man ; for it is essentially as Redeemer that He is the fulfiller of the Sabbath law, and so its Lord. May we not also see in this a prescience on the part of Christ of that change in the day which would be a necessary consequence of His resurrection on the first day of the week, and which would mark the commencement of the new dispensation by a day commemorative of this, rather than of the work of creation ?

The explanation given
in Hebrews.

The sublime sequence and parallel in these ages of God is explained to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. iv.). It is the more valuable as a help to understand the matter, as it is not primarily an argument about the Sabbath, which it introduces incidentally ; and as the passage seems to take for granted the belief in an age-long Sabbath, on the part of those to whom it is addressed. It may be freely rendered as follows :—

A free rendering of it.

‘For God hath spoken in a certain place (Gen. ii. 2) of the seventh day in this wise: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works ;” and in this place again: “They shall not enter into My rest” (Psa. xcv. 11). Seeing, therefore, it still remaineth that some enter therein, and they to whom it (God’s Sabbath-keeping) was first proclaimed, entered not in because of disobedience (in the fall, and after-

ward in the sin of the Israelites in the desert), again He fixes a certain day, saying in David's writings (long after the time of Joshua), "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Psa. xcv. 8). For if Joshua had given them rest in Canaan, He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There is therefore yet reserved a keeping of a Sabbath for the people of God. For He that is entered into His rest (that is, Jesus Christ, who has finished His work and entered into His rest in heaven), He Himself also rested from His own works, as God did from His own. Let us therefore earnestly strive to enter into that rest.'

The Rest
promised to
God's
people.

It is evident that in this passage God's Sabbath-keeping, the rest intended for man in Eden, and for Israel in Canaan, Christ's rest in heaven after finishing His work, the rest which may now be enjoyed by Christians, and the final heavenly rest of Christ's people, are all indefinite periods mutually related, and are all Sabbath-keepings of which the weekly Sabbath is a continuous reminder and token.

The various
Sabbath-
keepings
indefinite
periods
mutually
related.

VI.

The right understanding of the Old Testament Sabbath aids us in comprehending the connection of the Lord's Day of Christians with the Jewish Sabbath. If the latter had a reference to a

The connec-
tion be-
tween the
Old Testa-
ment Sab-
bath and
the Lord's
Day.

How the Lord's Day comes to occupy the place formerly occupied by the Jewish Sabbath.

What it links together.

The enhanced obligation of the Lord's Day.

Sabbath-keeping lost by the fall and restored by the Redeemer, the Son of Man must be 'Lord of the Sabbath,' in the sense of fulfilling and realising its prophetic import. Therefore the day on which He finished His work and entered into His rest must of necessity be that to be commemorated by Christians, until the time when the return of Christ shall inaugurate that final and eternal Sabbath which remains to His people. Thus the Lord's Day comes to occupy the same important place formerly occupied by the Jewish Sabbath. In this, as in other things, the Old Testament saints without us are not complete, for our Lord's Day is the completion of their Sabbath. It links together God's creative work and Christ's work of redemption; the Sabbath rest lost in the fall and restored in the Saviour; the imperfect state of the militant Church, still having only a pledge of a rest to come, and the Church triumphant, which will enjoy this rest for ever. If the Sabbath that carried with it the mournful memory of the first sin was holy, much more that which points forward, through Christ's finished work and present rest, to a heavenly paradise. If the obligation to remember it, was to the Hebrew equal to that of the most binding moral duties, still more must the Lord's Day be a day to be remembered by the Christian, as the memorial of Christ's finished work, and of our heirship of all

the divine ages, past, present, and to come. Thus we see that the moral and spiritual dignity and obligation of the Lord's Day rise far above those of the Jewish Sabbath, and we can understand how naturally the apostles and primitive Christians, almost without note of the change, and without requiring any positive enactment, transferred their allegiance from the seventh to the first day of the week.

The change from the seventh to the first day.

Some attempt seems then to have been made to perpetuate the Jewish Sabbath as a matter of legal obligation, either along with or instead of the Lord's Day. This idea is distinctly repudiated in Colossians (ii. 16). 'Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day;' adding as a reason, 'which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body (or substance) is Christ's.' There can scarcely be a question that the Old Testament Sabbath is intended here, and the assertion that it was a 'shadow' of the future coming of Christ is in perfect harmony with the testimony of other parts of Scripture, and with the idea that when Christ, who is the Substance, had come, the old Sabbath, as the anticipatory shadow, must pass away. It is to be noticed, in accordance with this, that where the day observed by Christians is mentioned in the New Testament it is called simply 'the first day of the week,'

The assertion in harmony with other parts of Scripture.

The description of the day as observed by Christians.

except in that passage of the Apocalypse where for the first time we find the term, afterwards general, 'the Lord's Day.'¹

The teaching of Christ maintains its sacredness.

We find also that while Christ Himself directed attention to the higher significance of the Sabbath instead of minute attention to Pharisaical detail in its observance, neither His example nor His teaching took away from its sacredness or diminished its obligation, except when opposed to the direct service of God, or to works of necessity or mercy.

VII

How the Sabbath should be kept.

If we ask how the Lord's Day should be kept, we see first of all that our Sabbath should be a time of communion with God, and a time for acts of love and mercy to our fellow-men. For in this we have the example of God in the Edenic Sabbath before the fall. There is a divine activity which is not incompatible with this highest type of rest; for God in His Sabbath would still sustain and nourish all His creatures, and relieve their wants by a beneficent providence.

Further, we must not fail to note that there is in Scripture a close parallel between the finished work of Christ and this original rest of God after

¹ Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10. In the Peschito version the expression 'Lord's Day' occurs in 1 Cor. xi. 20 (Etheridge's Translation, p. 272).

the creation. For the Redeemer entered into His rest when He could say: 'It is finished.' And just as the Creator, after His work is finished, continues to sustain His creatures by His providence, so in like manner the Lord Jesus, having entered into His rest in the most holy place on high, continues as the great High Priest and Intercessor to sustain the spiritual life of His people. His words are thus true in a very literal sense: 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

The right understanding of the Sabbath also throws light on the true relation of the moral law to the Christian system. That specially Jewish law which related to the Temple service and the Aaronic priesthood, was, we are informed in the New Testament, of temporary obligation only, and was annulled by its fulfilment in Christ. But the Decalogue still remains as the rule of life, though exalted by the teaching of Christ; and accordingly the old Sabbath becomes the Lord's Day, with the higher sanction of being the memorial of the finished work of redemption, as well as of creation. Thus the Decalogue does not pass away until the time shall come when it will be no more needed, because believers, like their Lord, will have entered into an eternal Sabbath rest.

Just as we honour and trust in the Saviour, so shall we regard the day which commemorates His entering into His rest. Just as we appreciate that

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rest which He gives us in part here, and as our hearts long for that rest which remains in the Father's house, so shall we hold in loving remembrance the day which points to it, and which enables us to have some faint realisation of it in the midst of sorrow and trouble. In a lower sense, also, the Sabbath is a relief from the heavy curse of unremitting labour, and though the world will never gain much spiritually by a merely legal observance of the Sabbath, even this is of priceless value to the working man in a moral, social, and physical point of view. It is thus not merely an arbitrary enactment, but a statement of an effect depending on an adequate cause, that the man or the nation honouring God's day of rest will itself be honoured and prospered.

The Lord's
Day points
forward to
the second
coming of
Christ.

The Lord's Day also in its true significance points forward to the second coming of Christ, and to the New Jerusalem. Christ our forerunner has entered into His Sabbath, and that rest remains for us—to be fully enjoyed in that blessed time of the restitution of all things which He is to inaugurate, and when Eden will bloom again, or rather will be replaced by the City of God, which comes down from heaven. Then God's Sabbath-keeping will be fully restored to man never again to be broken, and the weekly day of rest will be swallowed up in that eternal Sabbath, of which it is but a feeble and transitory type. Then the day

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rest will
then be
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up in the
eternal
Sabbath.

of the Lord will be revealed in its full force and meaning.

After what has been said, it may scarcely be necessary to ask the question, What is the relative religious sacredness or obligation of the Lord's Day and the ancient Sabbath? We should look at this question, however, in the full light of the new dispensation. To the Christian, love to God, as the reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, now takes the place of legal obligation. We are therefore not surprised to find that in the New Testament the Lord's Day does not appear as a stringent law to be enforced by pains and penalties, but as a loving tribute to our best Friend, as a commemoration of the completion of that work of self-sacrifice which has secured for us the highest blessings in this world and that which is to come; as a means of attaining even here to that blessed rest which He has prepared for us, and as a presage of a still happier rest in the future. Such a day cannot be enforced on the unwilling or unappreciative. God may invite them to His feast; but they will make excuse, and man cannot force them to partake of it. But is it on this account less sacred than the old Sabbath? Is it not rather incomparably more holy? And should it not be one of the highest aims of Christians to guard it for its highest uses, and, while entering themselves into that happy Sab-

The relative obligation of the Lord's Day and the ancient Sabbath.

Why the New Testament does not enforce the Lord's Day by pains and penalties.

The Lord's Day not less sacred than the old Sabbath.

What Christians should aim at.

We are
called to
enter into
rest.

batism of which it is the emblem, to induce all others to accept Christ's gracious invitation to enter into this rest, and to respect the day which is at once its sign and its means of attainment. It is to be feared that inattention to the sacredness of the Lord's day, and inability to enter into the inward peace and rest which it represents, are besetting evils of our time, and hindrances to our attaining to the highest type of Christianity. We are called on by our Redeemer to enter into rest ; but like Israel of old we may fall short of it, and be doomed, in this world, to wander long in the desert of disappointed hopes. And for those who lack belief in the promise and purpose of God, to which the Day of Rest points forward, can there be hope that they will participate in its realisation hereafter ?

'Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of unbelief.'

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